



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXXI

JANUARY, 1908

NUMBER I

Editorial

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SPIRITUAL POWER

THE SURFACE AND THE DEPTHS OF LIFE

Professor William James has recently called attention to the experience, which he says is common among men, of discovering that beneath the first stratum of energy, so to speak, and the layer of weariness which bounds it and checks exertion, there is another stratum of power, on which, if only they will push through the layer of weariness, they may draw with the same pleasure in exertion as at first, or even greater. He suggests further that it is quite possible to form the habit of breaking through this weariness-layer that separates the energy-strata until it will practically cease to exist, and one may draw constantly without weariness on the deeper sources of power. Of course, he adds, there are limits; the trees don't grow into the sky. But the plain fact remains that men the world over possess amounts of resource which only very exceptional individuals push to their extreme of use.

The general applications of this suggestion to physical and intellectual life, we will leave to physiologists and psychologists to discuss. It is with its application to the moral and spiritual life that we are concerned. Certainly what Professor James says of the powers of men generally is pre-eminently true of those powers which we commonly designate as moral and spiritual, that "most of us continue to live unnecessarily near our surface."

THE NEED OF DEEPER SPIRITUAL LIFE

Just here is one of the greatest needs of the present hour. The intense living of our day tends to deepen life intellectually by drawing upon all the reserve powers of men and engaging them in

the tasks that business and politics, science and philosophy, present to them. But precisely this intellectual intensity in the realms that are not distinctly stimulating spiritually threatens to paralyze the soul in the religious sphere. Moderate physical exercise tends to quicken intellectual life; but the great athlete is not usually a great philosopher. Business that brings one into contact with his fellow-men is more conducive to altruism than the life of the hermit; but enormous business responsibilities tend to make men seem only the parts of a machine and to destroy the altruistic spirit. So intense devotion to science or philosophy may leave no opportunity for the deeper religious experiences. And since such experiences are as a consequence not within the horizon of one's own life, even the portrayals of them in the lives of others are remanded to the region of the unknown, the imaginary, the mythical. The most superficial layer of spiritual experiences is all that is known, and the layer of resistance that separates it from the deeper possibilities of the soul becomes impenetrable.

To the intensity of life in the practical, scientific, and philosophic spheres, it would be irrational to object. Not only in the matter of physical comfort and intellectual development but in that of religion and morality, science and philosophy have wrought for our advantage. But as a complement to their intensity, there is need of a like intensity of spiritual life, a penetration in experience into those deeper possibilities of fellowship with God of which other ages have had enriching and ennobling experience. Such fellowship is not indeed a thing of the past only. But because of the very intensity with which men pursue each his own task there is danger that the deeper possibilities of spiritual life will become unknown to those who have made the greatest achievements in philosophy and science, and vice versa. In the article to which we have referred Professor James says:

In few of us are functions not tied up by the exercise of other functions. Relatively few medical men and scientific men, I fancy, can pray. Few can carry on any living commerce with "God." Yet many of us are well aware how much freer and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up by the critical atmosphere in which we have been reared. There are in everyone potential forms of activity that actually are stunted out of use.

How then shall this deeper life be achieved?

FAITH IN ITS POSSIBILITY A CONDITION OF ITS ACHIEVEMENT

The answer is in part suggested by what has already been said. The man of scientific temper is tempted to disbelieve in the existence of that which is outside the horizon of his experience and different in character from it. So many such things have disappeared under scientific scrutiny that one comes to expect that this will always happen. Especially does the scientific temper recoil from the mysterious. Yet this attitude is really unscientific. Professor James reminds us that in all phases of personal life, physical, intellectual, moral, there are deeper strata than the ordinary man ever touches or even dreams of. He reminds us too that prayer, commerce with God, gives to life a power and energy that it otherwise lacks. These are ample reasons for the man who aspires to the greatest things in life, however thoroughly he is imbued with the scientific temper, to believe in the possibility of a more real fellowship with God than he ever yet experienced. It is as unscientific as it is irreligious to refuse to believe in larger possibilities of the soul because one has not yet experienced them. To believe in the possibility of a life of real fellowship with God is the first condition of attaining it.

But what practical steps can one take actually to attain the experience, and so secure both larger spiritual power, and experimental confirmation of one's faith that such experience and power are possible?

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF ISOLATION

One cannot secure this end by isolation from the common life of common men. Hours of solitude, occasional days of quiet, are needful to the development of the soul's deepest life. But monastic withdrawal from life has had its trial and proved its inefficiency. Nor can our end be achieved by isolation from the intellectual life of our day. No doubt a pious plowman or humble house servant may have a deeper and more joyous sense of the presence of God than some philosophers or men of science. No doubt a little learning or a great deal may be dangerous and tend to the atrophy of the spiritual powers. Yet the problems of this day cannot be solved by ignoring science and philosophy, still less by a dogmatic obscurantism. Spiritual religion must prove its power to live in the atmosphere of intense intellectual life, as well as in the cobbler's shop and

on the farm. If it is to come off victorious in this age, there must be men of deep spirituality who are, to say the least, not ignorant of what the men of intellectual power are thinking about and learning.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Not by isolation either from the common life of men or from the scientific and philosophic thought of the age, but by giving, even while one lives in the midst of the intense life of this day, time, thought, energy, to the spiritual side of life, can one achieve the desired end. The deeper spiritual life cannot exist without prayer. It is of minor consequence so far as concerns its effect in this direction what form it takes, whether it be petition, or adoration, or affirmation. Its essential element is the realization to one's self of God as a factor, the great factor, in human life, our own and that of the race. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those that seek after him. Such experience is mysterious. The tests that verify it are not those of the physical laboratory. One cannot put out his hand and touch God, or open his eyes and see him. God no man hath seen. But the mysteriousness, even the inexplicableness of the experience, is no reason for refusing to enter into it. At the back of all the experiences of life is mystery the elimination of which is not at all necessary to a valuation of the experience. It is true that the mind seeks an explanation of its experiences. But the tests of such an explanation vary with the nature of the experience. You cannot test a philosophic hypothesis with a thermometer, nor an electrical engine by its moral effects. The effects of prayer are not limited to the inner life of the soul, or confined to him who prays. But by the very fact that communion with God elevates and energizes the moral life of men, it has the same claim to be regarded as contact with reality that wireless telegraphy has for being believed to have reality back of it.

THE VALUE OF PAST EXPERIENCE: THE LITERATURE OF POWER

But if depth of experience is not achieved in isolation from the common life of one's contemporaries, still less is it promoted by ignorance of the deepest and richest spiritual experiences of the past. The seeker after depth of life must know the noblest religious litera-

ture of the past, the books that reflect or portray for us the experiences of those men who lived in the assured consciousness of fellowship with God, and who, so living, developed a depth and richness of life that other men lacked. Not every conviction that such men held is necessarily true. But the life they lived tapped the springs of power, and gives evidence of having been in touch with reality. It is more reasonable to believe that others whose lives are shallower and less powerful are living in the superficial strata of their powers, than that these more powerful lives exceeded the limits of the real. Here is one of the greatest reasons for continuing the study of the Bible. Its books belong to the literature of spiritual power. Our great object in studying them is to rediscover and reproduce the spiritual life which is the deepest cause of their existence. It is one of the auguries of hope for the future that the Bible is being studied both widely and deeply.

THE INSPIRATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

Other ways there are also of deepening spiritual life, notably the mutual fellowship of men who recognize the need of stronger, richer life and aspire to reach for themselves and for others the sources of power. For as the rich experience of the past enshrined in literature has its peculiarly helpful influence, so on the other hand has the immediate touch of present experience its own power to beget its like and by reciprocation to generate yet deeper experience.

THE NEED AND THE HOPE OF THE HOUR

In this day of intense intellectual life and rapid movements in science and philosophy, there ought to come also, first, a fresh recognition of the possibility of deeper spiritual life and correspondingly greater power, and then a practical experience of these; and this not in antagonism to, but in association with, the higher attainments in science and philosophy. May we not hope for, as we certainly imperatively need, men of eminence in science and philosophy who also know, appreciate, and take into account the deepest possibilities of the religious life, and on the other hand men who, with knowledge and sympathetic appreciation of the intellectual life of the present age, and themselves living in the deeper strata of spiritual life, can speak to their generation with the power that comes from such living?